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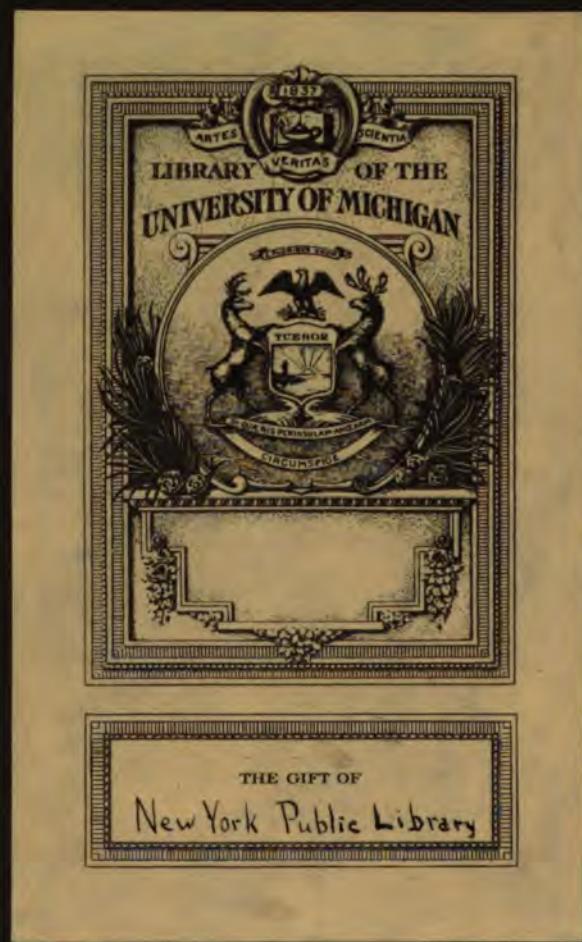
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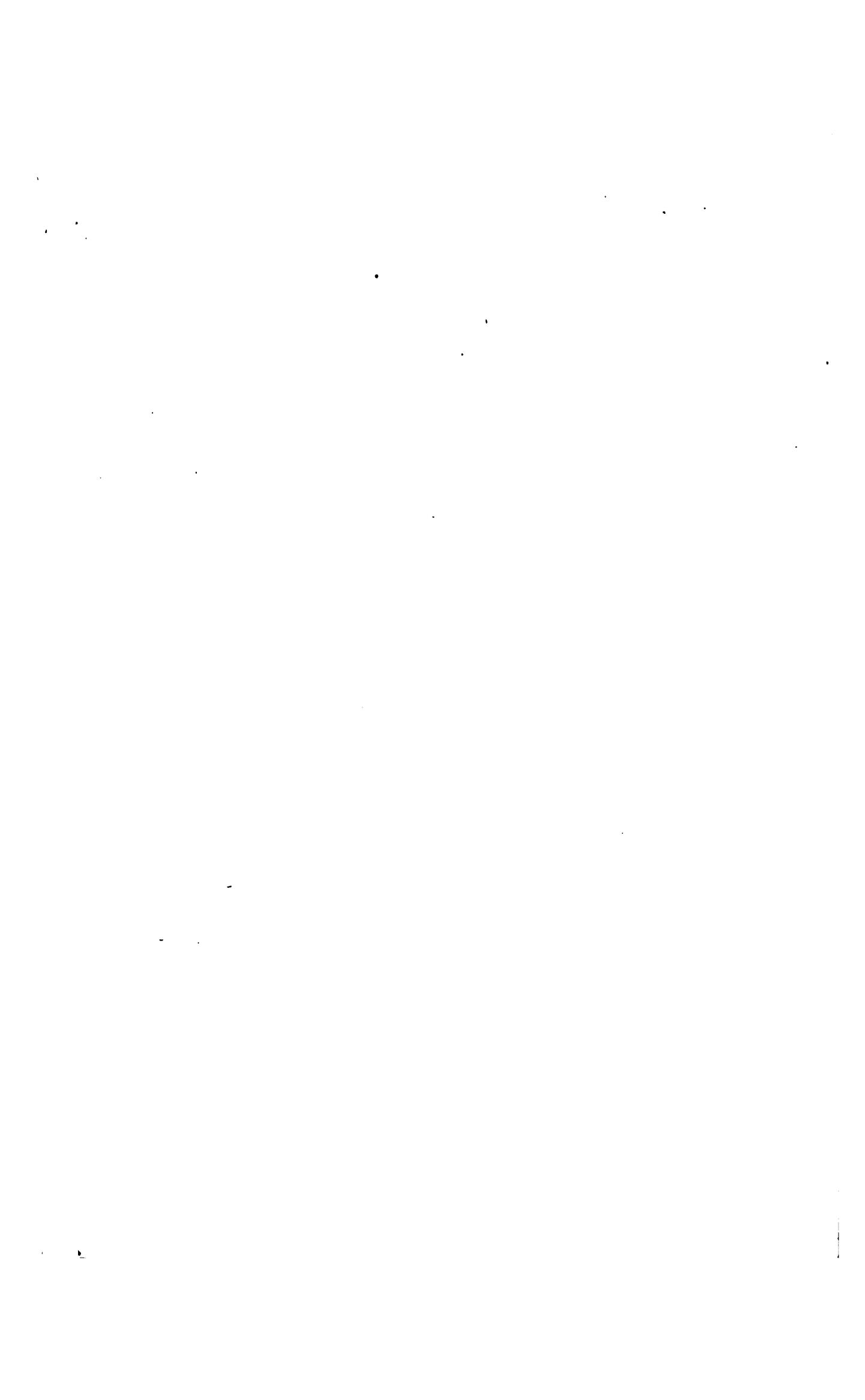
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# *The Illustrated Book*

*Notes on an Exhibition in the Print Gallery of  
The New York Public Library*

*By Frank Weitenkampf*

*New York  
1919*



On

economy as an incidental factor in the attainment of an appropriateness based on the materials used and on the end in view. And thus we have arrived at a fundamental and necessary factor in all the arts.

Perhaps such definitions in the grammar and rhetoric of illustration may help one to avoid the myopic attitude of the strict specialist inclined to speak in superlatives of everything within his blinkered vision. Any such clearing away of mental cobwebs will not lessen enjoyment of this old work. Faults found may well result in bringing some of those old designers humanly nearer to us. And that modified point of view may help accentuate other points of interest in their work.

Certain books of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, by their absolute expression of the ideals of book-making here indicated, hold a rank quite undisputed. Notably the *Hypnerotomachia* (Venice, 1499). At the other end in the scale of excellence are the early and crude productions such as the block-book *Ars Moriendi* (1460-70), quite touching in its uncouth helplessness. Yet even here, and certainly but little later, there is discernible a healthy vigor, a freshness of vision not always preserved in its pristine strength as technique, in the following century, advanced to a noteworthy degree of facility and sophistication. Indeed, the tracing of that development forms an important element in the appreciation and enjoyment of an exhibition of illustrated books such as this. A rich array of individual, racial, and local expression is offered in this review.

Development was rapid. As early as 1486, with the publication of Breydenbach's "Peregrinatio," there was produced a piece of book-making which, as A. W. Pollard truly says, "stands on a little pinnacle by itself." The book is more modern than the famous "Nuremberg Chronicle" which came seven years later. Indeed, Reuwich the artist works a bit in the spirit of the nineteenth century illustrator, with facile attainment, — glibly, one might almost say. The flexible conscience which enabled him to include a unicorn in a group of animals which he had "seen in the Holy Land" is perhaps different by a shade or so from the point of view shown in the use of the same portrait cut to personify various individuals, or the same city view to stand for various places, as we find it in the "Nuremberg Chronicle," or in the Italian "Supplementum Chronicarum" of Bergomensis.

The essential point is that even though the too profusely illustrated "Chronicle" contrasts not quite favorably with the taste shown in the "Peregrinatio," the drawings by Pleydenwurff and Wohlgemuth for the later book somehow show a massive strength that brings the words "painter quality" to mind, and accentuates, by contrast, a certain smartness in the other book.

oltra il suo potere la improbitate del caco Cupidine sosteniuia, di peruenire la onde celo desideraua anhelante intendeva, Cum summa opera di cofirmare & stabilire per medio della riuerenda Antista, Dinanti alla quale celo era apresentato, che ambi dui uno solo ligamine tenacissimamente inuinculare facesse. Et del mio aspecto relevato, cum demulcete eloquio per questa forma letamente celo disse.



Celebre & sacra Matrona, si meritano di essere auditi gli supplici & di uoti seruatori, & deditissimi cultori della Diuina Paphia, dinati il tuo sancto auditorio & tribunale, siano hora pientissima Domina auscultati da te, nel presente le mie impense prece, & diuotissimi exorati, Cū fiducia produci, di conseguire fauore da te insigne Templaria. Laquale a questo amoro acto, ultimo cofugio arbitro, & alle mie acerbe afflictione reputo efficacissimo Amuleto, Subleuamento, & uera & eximia remediatrice. Imperoche sei a questo loco assumpta, & alle sacrificale Are della sanctissima Cytherea, cū tāca sanctimonia, sinceramente famulando, peradiutare, mediare la sua gratia, gli inepti & discordi animi, & in uno uolere readunare & consenso, gli amatori. Pertanto alla tua maiestale præsentia son io fiduciamente uenuto, perche sola sei habile di potere patrocinare gli miseri amanti (como io) che languiscono, per iæqualitate del crudele & lictorio lancinare del suo iniusto figlio. Funde legrate prece dunque ad qlla Ma-

D

A PAGE FROM THE "HYPNEROTOMACHIA" (1499)

In these two books the first use of cross-hatching appears, following the usual progression indicated by Hamerton: 1. Outline. 2. Shading in parallel lines. 3. Cross-hatching. As each line in facsimile wood cutting has to be thrown into relief by cutting around it, cross-hatching throws on the engraver the burden of chipping out the interstices between the crossing lines, a condition

of affairs which called forth Ruskin's righteous wrath when he found it carried to senseless excess by illustrators of his day.

*In sudore vultus tui vesceris pane tuo.*

GENE. I



**A la sueur de ton usage  
Tu gaigneras ta pauvre vie:  
Apres long trauail, & usage,  
Voicy la Mort qui te conue:**

G 11

A PAGE FROM HOLBEIN'S "DANCE OF DEATH"

typical of the years that followed, was an all-around illustrator who pictured female costumes, animals, and what not, but is particularly remembered by his book of trades.

Meanwhile, in the thirties of this sixteenth century, Hans Holbein at Basle turned for the moment to the illustration of the Old Testament and the Dance of Death, the cuts by Lützelburger, after his designs, traveling to Lyons, France, where these pictures were printed and published in 1538. The

A year or so after the "Chronicle" came the so-called "Nitschwitz Psalter" (Zinna, about 1494), which has been pronounced the "most richly decorated German book of the fifteenth century." And in 1494 was issued also Brant's "Ship of Fools" with its strongly humorous flavor. The spirit of this German work finds its culmination in Albrecht Dürer. Although he did but few drawings which actually appeared in printed books, he produced a series of woodcuts illustrating the "Passion" and the "Apocalypse."

Rather more than Dürer were Schaufelein and Burgkmaier drawn into the service of Emperor Maximilian's plans of self-glorifying publications: "Theuerdanck," and "Weiss Kunig." But in this burst of grandiloquent over-illustration the fine impulse died away. Jost Amman, fairly

illustrations by Holbein, "first of the moderns," who became court painter to Henry VIII of England, are little masterpieces of appropriate handling. No wasted lines, little cross-hatching; unity of purpose and directness of result. A little cut, not three inches square, such as "Death and the Ploughman," has all the breadth and bigness of a large canvas or mural painting, with yet no futile attempt to crowd in all the detail of the larger work. The effect desired is completely produced, while, as Ruskin says, it makes no difference whether Death has the proper number of ribs or not.

As someone has tersely put it, in all this German work we find mainly character and instruction; in the Italian cuts of the same period, grace and decoration. That appears in the pictorial titles which both those two reforming spirits, Luther and Savonarola, found it well to give their propagandist or polemic pamphlets, although the German cuts (some by Cranach) often were decorative borders and the Italian ones illustrations. It appears even in the somewhat crude pictures in Turrecremata's "Meditationes" (1467), the first Italian book with woodcut illustrations.

As early as 1472 there was published the "De Re Militari" of Valturis, illustrations in outline, quite in accord with the type. In the "Supplementum Chronicarum" (1481) appears the use of solid blacks so characteristic of the Italian work and utilized also — with, of course, different racial and individual expression — by the Japanese print-makers and by nineteenth century illustrators such as Aubrey Beardsley. In 1499 there was issued in Venice that most famous of Italian illustrated incunabula, Colonna's "Hypnerotomachia

#### 14 *The Ballad of "Beau Brocade."*

*By the light of the moon she could see him drest  
In his famous gold-sprigged tambour vest;*



*And under bis silver-gray surtout,  
The laced, historical coat of blue,*

A PAGE FROM DOBSON'S "BEAU BROCADE"  
ILLUSTRATED BY HUGH THOMSON

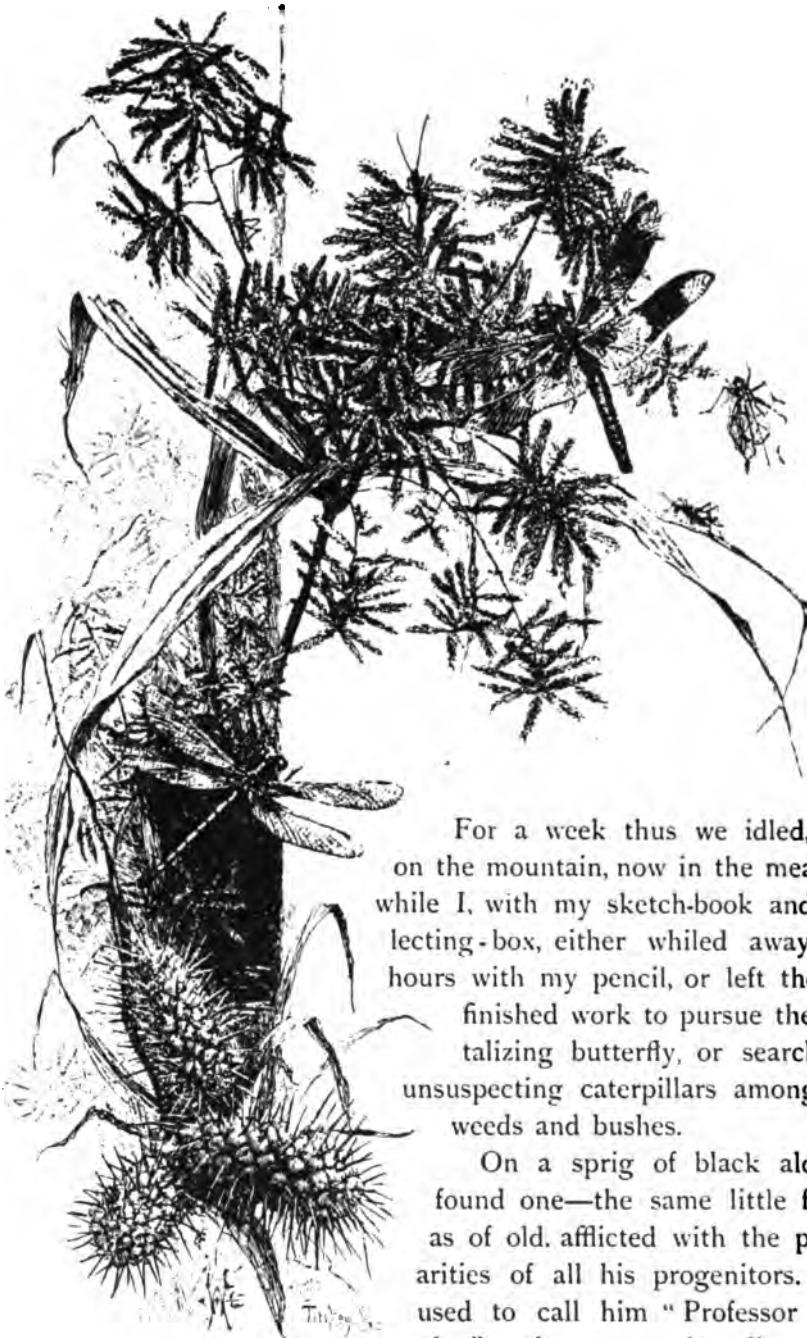
Poliphilii," already referred to. As we get into the sixteenth century, here too, decline begins. It's the same story in France, where printers and publishers such as Vostre, Dupré, Verard, issued a series of fine "hours" in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. These form a remarkably interesting sub-specialty in illustration. Here, too, technical development brought gradual decay, although it is masked at first by the masterly facility of a Geoffrey Tory, who has something of the ease of the practiced illustrator of later days. (It is interesting to note that the later "Hours" issued by Hardouin are more remarkable for gorgeous illumination than for excellence in design; indeed, the lines of the latter are often quite obliterated by the coloring.)

So here, too, the inner impulse waned as dexterity increased. And then wood engraving fell on evil days. Line engraving on copper came to its own for a while. The Rubens and Vandycck schools of engravers of the seventeenth century in the Netherlands, and the French portrait engravers of the same period, brought line engraving to the full flower of its accomplishment and possibilities. This technique gained, combined with a liberal use of the etching needle, served in the next century in France for the book illustrations which, like all graphic art of that time in France, mirrored the elegance, gaiety, luxury and easy moral sense which marked the eighteenth century.

J. M. Moreau *le jeune*, among the designers, comes most readily to mind. His series of plates such as those for Rousseau's work, or for Retif de la Bretonne's "Monument du Costume," incidentally form a veritable storehouse of pictorial facts regarding costumes and customs of his day. And there were also Eisen, Gravelot, Marillier, Choffard, Cochin, St. Aubin, to design the graceful, delicate vignettes and head and tail-pieces which made these books the charming things they are.

While this implied a combination of intaglios and relief processes, entailing double printing, the illustrations, being in line, to that extent at least were in harmony with the type-page. Indeed, in some cases, such as La Borde's "Choix de Chansons" (1773), the entire book, text and illustrations, was engraved on copper. The whole thing, in its spirit of grace and charm, was quite French and was practically limited to France. A faint echo is apparent in the etched book illustrations of that prolific eighteenth century German, Chodowiecki, who tackled all sorts of subjects, even Shakespeare's "Hamlet," with a certain facility. Lacking strength, his work reflected honest bourgeois life and ideas in an honest bourgeois way.

The use of copper-plate engraving and etching persisted well into the nineteenth century, when it produced the delicately engraved vignettes after J. M. W. Turner and such late and well designed illustrations as Darley's



For a week thus we idled, now  
on the mountain, now in the meadow,  
while I, with my sketch-book and collecting-box,  
either whiled away the hours with my pencil,  
or left the unfinished work to pursue the tantalizing butterfly,  
or search for unsuspecting caterpillars among the weeds and bushes.

On a sprig of black alder I found one—the same little fellow as of old, afflicted with the peculiarities of all his progenitors. We used to call him "Professor Wiggle," owing to an hereditary nervous habit of wiggling his head from side to side when not otherwise

for J. F. Cooper's novels. And in the twenties and thirties, England and America had their "Galleries" and "Annuals" and "Keepsakes," the art in which, fathered by able artists in some cases, in others was sentimental and weak to mushiness. These "elegant accessions to the drawing-room table" included as gift books even glorifications of Greenwood and Auburn cemeteries! Against this work the vivaciousness of George Cruikshank stands out, in such light and charming designs as his "Puss in Boots." In his "Oliver Twist" series, on the other hand, his melodramatics fail to convince. A vein of somewhat stagey humor pervades the illustrations of the group of men who worked with his caricature method, notably H. K. Browne ("Phiz") and Robert Seymour. Very much later came Strang, in a serious spirit akin to that of Legros, to illustrate Don Quixote and Kipling and others in etching.

Etching to produce tone — aquatint — usually heightened by hand-coloring, served for books such as the "Microcosm of London" (plates by Rowlandson and Pugin) and particularly Richard Ayton's "Voyage round Great Britain," William Daniell's plates for which rank with the best work of the kind. And mezzotint was used notably in illustrations for Milton by John Martin, about whom J. G. Huneker grows eloquently enthusiastic. Finally, lithography had its period of use in this field. Baron Taylor's monumental and voluminous "Voyages pittoresques en France" included Bonington's wonderful "Rue du Gros Horloge." Delacroix used the stone to interpret "Faust" and "Hamlet" in a spirit of "truculent romanticism." Numerous lithographic albums saw the light, a number by Charlet, for instance, mainly humorous drawings with a line or two of text underneath. Indeed, lithography became quite the recognized vehicle for caricature, with Daumier and Gavarni as prominent exponents.

Meanwhile, wood engraving, after leading a precarious existence in chapbooks and the like, had come back. Bewick's adoption of the box-wood block cut across the grain, and the graver, developed wood engraving into an art of tones and colors, and not only of line. The white line against the black background, reducing blacks to grays, is, of course, the secret of this. Instead of cutting around lines to throw them into relief, the engraver now could simply cut lines (like the copper plate engraver) into the surface of the block, thus reducing to lighter tints the solid black which would result from printing if the surface remained quite untouched. For a while, at that time, the characteristic nature of wood engraving was not understood by certain engravers who painfully strove to imitate copper engraving on the wood block.

An early and pleasing example of nineteenth century book illustration is the 1814 edition of Rogers' "Poems," with designs by Stothard, facsimile cuts after designs intelligently made in open, uncrossed lines. Quite of their

